

Open Title for Flavio Di Marco

Painting: definition of surface using the means of surface and in terms of surface; analysis (also) sub limine of the visual image. Painting always constitutes itself "Defining itself" by means of surface or in other words it completes itself by assuming the gesture of its (own) definition (The end as the goal, the end as - other - limine) in relation to the surface in two different senses (or ways): as place since the painting lives on the life of the surface and as a definition of that place because without the picture the surface would be problematically undefinable (a pure abstraction). That means that the significance of picture is in its capacity to show the surface (ontological limits, caesura point, purely conceptual place - and yet physical - that separates the volumes in the world making them real) but its significance is also in the individualization of its own threshold, that unbreakable/binding region of (reason for) its existence. In fact painting poses the problem of superficial as condition as the problem of its limits, which is precisely the problem posed by painting. This has apparently nothing to do with what it implies; the concept of image (photograph, iconic, icastic, virtual, electronic, cibernet, etc.) because image, however it is obtained, at its pictoric limit is thing while painting is something else.

Cela va sans dire! Image is sign, significant of other than itself and picture is rather sign or significant of (in)itself. Picture, for that matter, is not even thing (a physical element in an act of communication) because its physicality is never truly that of image-video, image-pixel, or cyber-image, even though it appears hard and "Rich in depth" in relation to its pseudo-non-physicality. But this is deceptive for its the trick of painting. The (psuedo) physicality of picture announces (weighs upon) it's place of passage from one physicality to another. Limine, interposed between one surface and another, is a real/virtual threshold that opens (or closes) on the world of painting, which is a world of negation of world and its presumed physicality.

Picture cannot "Signify the world" for the simple fact that it places itself on the limits of the world or rather it is the limits. It is a negation paradox that denies that which it affirms precisely while it affirms it because of the fact that it is affirming it. The pictoric image, which is not at all image, aproximates itself markedly to the poetic word, which is clearly all but word. Like the poetic word is always before anything else, inquiry of the word; so to is the pictoric image, primarily, an analysis of image. Furthermore, the word into which poetry investigates is not really word and the image over which moves the unrest of painting is rather an overcoming of image. It is its state put in jeopardy.

Parting from the reduction of space to surface, picture poses the questioning of its own image. A poetic analogy is necessary (is the pleasure of symmetry stronger or that of shattered symmetry?) but it is difficult to produce because no term exists to describe this concept of that which is to the word like surface is to space - maybe the same concept of "Word threshold". And yet the poetic word rests precisely at the threshold of word; above all because it siezes (and values) from the word the "Superficial" aspects (the skin of the word, it's plasticity, it's sonorous and visual form, rhythm, staying power and it's enigmatic quality). Additionally, poetry searches for the "Origin" of the word, which is by definition "lost" but upon which rests the potential productiveness of the word. In the end it renounces the usage of the word as economic transmission (which is nothing other than reuse) making itself instead epiphanic kindling and emerging from the (inexpressable)outskirts of the word to its subliminal zone.

Banal then is the communicative word - narrative, descriptive, documentary, informative - and there is poetry, which is elsewhere. In comparison, there is the mundane image - that wherever it is found inveighs like the most effective supreme instrument and then there is picture which is everything but that. The characteristic of threshold is what distinguishes and separates picture from image for the image instead announces itself and is produced as convention, like the joining of visual traces (an economic agreement), which taken as they are become significant. Whereas picture offers itself as a place of passage, as an access to an elsewhere that is beyond physicality

(and not to take away from it) is also its own physicality. Better said: It is opened and closed limine, entrance and negation of transit and it is the "Fourth wall" of a reality that has no walls.

Lets be clear, its not that picture is exactly this, however in every case it is... and if it doesn't succeed in being this - it cannot be anything else (today) and is worth declaring dead. It cannot possible be image anymore because the means of production and action are becoming infinitely more powerful. Picture cannot even be a pure and insolent assertion of its being anymore, nor a sounding line on the conditions of its own existence as an (implicit) self-legitimization. It also cannot be image anymore since in certain cases it never was able to be: it accepts concession as a premise (Introductory remark)(and question of respite) to its next guaranteed (promised) disappearance... the end of picture: like Malevich thought began to think of it.

The pictoric work opens itself to the observer as the threshold that in only one stroke indicates its place and the place itself: The location of the picture (where the picture initiates formation) and the place of whom looks at it (where in the same mode begins to form the image). The work is the surface of the painting, and it is that which stabilizes the contact between the two places. It is the point of transition, the place-non-place (l'atopia) that only the look can pass through and cross over and therefore render place, habitating it in this way. The other side of the threshold - that always has to be present- answers and mirrors itself back: not to the general world (all that is not the work and that seems to circulate it) but to that precise point in the world from which the work looks at itself. This is only a point: abstractly coincidental with the mathematical correspondence (hence extremely limited; like the monocular pupil, the adimensional finish line, or the pin-shaped viewfinder) in theory and due to Renaissance Art; scarcely individualized but hopefully equally limited, in all other cases, to that portion of (however minimal) mundane space that permits the "reading" of the work. A space which is not too far away that one may still pick out its particularities and not too close as to dissipate the total vision.

The titles of the paintings of De Marco, which destiny has consented to find themselves at the threshold of the twenty-first century and beyond the death of painting, all allude to a dialectical condition of the work treated as threshold: <<Probabilmente Chiuso>> (Probable Closed) 1999, <<Parzialmente Visibile>> (Partially Visible) 1999, <<Retrostante>> (Lying Behind) 1997, <<Chiuso>> (Closed) 1999, <<Schermo. Possibilità Retrostante>> (Screen. Possibility lying behind) 1998, ect.. The negation of the transit, in these works, seems to have the better of its affirmation and the beyond of the threshold seems to give itself exclusively as a remote hypothesis, which is eventuality undemonstrable; directed entirely to the conquest of an object decisively impassable. Evidently, the "research", to which these works turn to is one of precisely the possibility of painting, and the possibility therefore of a reopening of the pictorial space, salvaging the quality-dignity of painting as a place of authentic vision. It is not surprising that this research considers itself implicitly utopian and if not bound directly for failure at least it is keenly aware of the precarity of its results and of their ineludible debatableness.

It is the debatable ability of the work, on the other hand, to demand it(expect it). No poet, whom is truly a poet can think even for a moment to have obtained a result (knowing that other worldly doings are just the facts of consumption). "He who devotes himself to a work becomes drawn to the point in which it is subordinated to the test of its impossibility. It is quite a nocturnal experience, or rather it is the same experience as night"(Blanchot, 1955). The night, in the paintings of De Marco, is the black barrier of the canvas, the black screen(but also white) on which the stare, trying to pass through, infringes itself. Here, there is a vast distance from that (auto)Analytic painting that, at first sight, seems to be the point of reference to our work. No, it is not the surface in itself that interests the look and its not the language that rivals for the exclusive object of the inquiry. If ever, it is the relationship between this language and its historians, it is the capacity of the work to give itself as opening, as a view to elsewhere. The impossibility of all that, in one hit: the advent of the night as the unrelenting effect of day.

It follows that the pigment and its life on the canvas ("texture") are not to make themselves topics of the works of De Marco and , furthermore, the works are not just to be analyzed according

to the surface form and then left. Differing from the illustrious but, at this point obsolete, tradition of abstractionism there is in these works, in these heavy walls and closed and then torn curtains a clear allusion (allusion? more than ever a defunct lexical) to the other world. Picture is an opening to a diverse dimension, a passing towards a real and fictitious world that is in the heart of the painting: it is an "Act of force" that De Marco repropose as the true problem of the work since it is only when it possesses that heart does the work pulse.

Certainly, one is not speaking about a trivial demand of "Figuration", of mere recognition of contained narrative, which in the end is no other than a declination (the most western and outdated) of the elsewhere painting but of an elsewhere sadly brought back to the here and now of each one of us. Rather one means to say of the "Nature" of the work's wall, of that that defines it, of it's energy (irregardless of other): it indicates the understanding that no commonly known image can exhibit this merit. The figure of the "Tear", regularly reoccurring on the surface and in the profoundness of the paintings of De Marco, has exactly the task of incarnating the passage and it's difficulty. It is the materialization of the desired look that painting needs as the co-agent of its existence. A look that gives itself only to discover itself insufficient or maybe even destructive. <<In this look, the work is lost...the work is everything except that desired look given precisely so that it may be lost and then overcome in order to unite itself with it's origin and devote itself to it's impossibility>>(Blanchot,1955).

De Marco sustains that picture is distance "Media" between a scrutinizing eye and a surface view. The physical support, it's layers and it's material characteristics are only, in this "Perspective", premises and necessary bases for the authentic process: "The observer forces himself to understand that the visual substance of the picture cannot be identifiable with the applied color on the canvas but rather it is interposed in the air and contained in the vision. The applied color on the surface is the pictorial practice but is not the picture itself. The practice of the construction of the image, in the sense of the pictorial practice of the material process, belongs to a real movement in a real space and remains only on the side of the reality of canvas and pigment. Picture, at a certain distance and in the profound sense of end is vision. It is an assumption of the natural-symbol of image and an overcoming of the same image, which in an interposed air, is the possibility of vision, atmosphere. Only the distance permits us to think of image, which without an observer, remains canvas and pigment".

An eye (and a mind) in front of the real/mental genesis of the picture, which in the end, is faculty to derive from the image through feeling and listening to it in it's state of overcoming. Therefore it is logical that the beyond-the-canvas spaces are in some way described (described?) by the paintings of De Marco. Spaces which can be explained by a complex and minimal sign system; the struttura affabulativa(structure tending towards fairytale) of the surface. In the course of time, a transparent reference to the degrees of symbolic acquisition of real space in the picture was formed. His works elicit pictorial tools like the scanning of the line-plane, the chiaroscuro reduced to black-white, and also the repercussion (lets say purely concrete) of these instances on the primary level of the depth of the surface, which are not by chance occasionally modelled after "Sculptural" givens. Its an enduring job of covering (gesso, acrylic, paste) and digging up, resembling a patient and "Artisan-like" relationship with the work similar to that practiced by bizantine painters.

If it is true, as explained by Florenski, that the value of the painted board,of the icon on the iconostasi, is in it's liturgy of knowing to hide and reveal itself(showing that which in the same gesture it hides because by definition it cannot be shown) and if it is likewise true that in the origins of the theory of mime painting is in the idea of "Veil", which covers the image while it is at the same time image an important conclusion can be made(exhibited persuasively as a power test by Parrasil to Zeus). Therefore, the game of being "Lost" or the indicating of the absence of that which must be possessed, and the blocking of the look at the threshold of it's blossom, is all absolutely the center and place of picture. For these reasons, picture, with how much it has on the other side of itself, cannot seize to confront and negate itself.

In the most recent works of De Marco that which is on the other side of the picture (negating it) has materialized itself has explicit linguistic sign (live voice). There is in these paintings the outline, the symbol, and the visual return to the effigy of the new landscape in which we live: the electronic piastre (the "Mother chip"), the computer keyboard. From these figures that are everything and nothing (how to do define them? - reality, objects, images, forms, or even simulacrum) the painter draws the structural scanning of the work, coinciding the "Physical" elaboration of the surface with a mime motive that does not yet propose anything real. For example, in the work intitled *Natura morta* (1999) nature could not be any more dead than this. The extra-pictorial object of the image (precisely the electronic outline) emerges from the surface of the work and attacks the figural installation...but in the end it is a false mime because the object "Represented" is nothing but a labyrinth of signs, a network of geometric elements going in orthogonal directions. It is a pictorial entity and a declination of the Cartesian language of abstractionism. The painting though is not "Abstract", given that it undoubtedly proposes the object represented: according to the logic of a obstructed representation that searches for itself without ever finding itself (In the form of its own vertiginous implosion).

In a world that is not the world, but only it's profound human soul (actual) and it's perversion(extreme), is where image is hidden. There, made of pure trapped electric energy, in a closed binary system, the image thrives and rages. The material given being so simple that it cannot be more than 1-0, opened/closed. The pixel, the point of pure light, glares electrically from the face of nothing, behind which there is nothing... From 0-->10 (of the tenth earth) where the supremeness deliriously raves, we have passed to the 1-0 of electronic communication. Pass/no pass. It is exactly like that desired look in front of the wall of the work...In the stabilized link with this reality(other, unreal)(that seems to reattribute relevance to the pictorial veil but that also declares itself the unfindable object of the discourse while it begins to talk about it) there is, I believe, the extreme attempt to measure painting with it's own limits and it's own reasons of subsistence, of perseverance and of resistance. The crux of the image and of it's loss is in this relationship and painting is dealing with what we can do about it.

It seems that De Marco is saying that it is necessary to recover in painting it's symbolic value whether it is in the sense desired by Panofsky or that hoped for by Florenskij. As act of interpretation of the world or as intention to elude it while proclaiming it illusory, respectively. It is absurd to not keep in mind the world but perhaps it is just as absurd to attach oneself furiously to the world, with nose pressed against the window or with eye oblivious and gazed caving into a faith devoid of ransoming. If it can still be something, picture can maybe be this: elementary but sovereign capacity to bring back distance.

Sandro Sproccati